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National Intelligence Bulletin

Top Secret

25X1

June 10, 1974

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Page Denied

National Intelligence Bulletin

June 10, 1974

CONTENTS

PALESTINIANS: Palestine National Council concludes its Cairo meeting. (Page 1)

FRANCE: Reform Minister Servan-Schreiber dismissed over nuclear test issue. (Page 3)

BURMA: Tough action by army suppresses labor disturbances. (Page 4)



25X1

FOR THE RECORD: (Page 7)

National Intelligence Bulletin

June 10, 1974

PALESTINIANS

The Palestine National Council concluded its week-long meeting in Cairo yesterday without reaching a decision on the critical question of Palestinian participation in the Geneva peace talks. Unwilling to face a showdown with representatives of the radical fedayeen groups that oppose participation, moderate PLO leaders agreed to delay making a decision until the PLO is formally invited.

With this concession, PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat was able to forestall threatened withdrawals from his organization by the small groups that are cooperating under the label of the Rejection Front. Arafat would probably accept their opposition, and even their withdrawal, if he were convinced that the PLO will, in fact, be invited to Geneva on terms acceptable to the Palestinians. Without this assurance, however, he has retreated to a policy statement sufficiently ambiguous to preserve at least the appearance of Palestinian unity.

The position paper finally approved by the council was much like that laboriously drafted by the PLO leadership in a series of meetings that preceded the Cairo session. It includes the compromise strategy of creating a Palestinian "national authority" over any land the Palestinians regain from Israel. It does not, however, include the blanket authorization to decide future strategy that the moderates had desired.

The council expanded from nine to fourteen the size of the PLO's powerful executive committee. This increase will bring into the group a representative of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command, the radical group that carried out the recent attack on Qiryat Shemona; an additional "independent" member; and three Palestinians recently expelled from the Israeli-occupied West Bank. The net effect of these changes will be to strengthen Arafat's hand; the new members from the West Bank were admitted into the larger council at his urging, and most independents have in the past been Arafat supporters.

National Intelligence Bulletin

June 10, 1974

In the Cairo debates, Arafat's more conciliatory views were defended by Zahayr Muhsin, of the sizable Syrian-controlled Saiqa group, and spokesmen for the Marxist-oriented Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. This backing, coupled with that of Egypt and Syria, leaves Arafat with the capability to railroad his views through the PLO and to lead a delegation to the peace talks at a future time.

For the present, Palestinian leaders apparently intend to continue their hard line, while pressing Cairo and Damascus to elicit for them an invitation to attend the peace talks. As a tactical matter, at least, they will continue to insist that any invitation, to be acceptable, must acknowledge the "rights of the Palestinians" and allow them to negotiate for an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied West Bank. [REDACTED]

25X1

National Intelligence Bulletin

June 10, 1974

FRANCE

President Giscard d'Estaing yesterday dismissed Reform Minister Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber after 12 days in office. Servan-Schreiber, who has been one of the most vocal critics of France's nuclear weapons program, had publicly criticized the military for continuing preparations for the 1974 series, which he charged virtually forced the new government to go on with the tests.

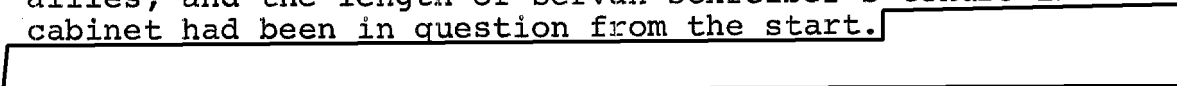
President Giscard recently announced that this year's tests in the South Pacific--like their predecessors--would be in the atmosphere, but future tests, he said, will be underground.



25X1

Servan-Schreiber, head of the Radical Party, is also a strong critic of other programs, such as the Concorde aircraft, backed by the President. His presence in the cabinet was an irritant to Giscard's Gaullist and centrist allies, and the length of Servan-Schreiber's tenure in the cabinet had been in question from the start.

25X1



National Intelligence Bulletin

June 10, 1974

BURMA

Tough suppressive action by the Burmese army has apparently ended serious labor disturbances in Rangoon. At least 22 demonstrators were killed before a 3,000-man military force now in Rangoon was able to get workers to call off further strikes.

Authorities have promised to try to meet the economic demands of the workers, and they will probably be able to provide them with some rice. Burma's chronic economic problems are not susceptible to rapid solution, however, and further labor unrest could occur in the near future.

The violence last week has left considerable bitterness among the workers, as well as among students who had joined the protests. Before the disturbances ended, some demonstrators, in addition to calling for economic gains, reportedly had demanded an end to President Ne Win's "one-man rule."

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25X1

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25X1

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25X1

National Intelligence Bulletin

June 10, 1974

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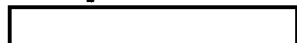
25X1 Eastern Europe - Portugal: The new Portuguese government has arranged for the establishment of diplomatic relations with the USSR and Yugoslavia. The Soviet-Portuguese agreement is apparently the result of talks in London between Soviet representatives and Portuguese Foreign Minister Soares. The restoration of relations between Yugoslavia and Portugal is an outgrowth of the recent visit of a Yugoslav foreign ministry official to Lisbon. These developments follow the announcement last week of an agreement between Portugal and Romania to restore diplomatic relations. [REDACTED]

25X1 Egypt-Romania: According to Cairo's semiofficial daily, Al Ahram, President Sadat is expected to begin a visit to Romania on June 27. The Sadat visit will take place against a background of improving bilateral relations. Since the October war there have been numerous high-level exchanges between the two countries, and the Romanian media have been favorable to Egyptian positions on the Middle East. Ceausescu apparently considers support of Egypt as one way to head off Arab anger with Romania for continuing its diplomatic relations with Israel.

25X1

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25X1



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